Charlotte Cooper.

THE

HAPPY PRESCRIPTION;

OR, THE

LADY RELIEVED FROM HER LOVERS:

A COMEDY, IN RHYME.

WRITTEN FOR A PRIVATE THEATRE,

BY

WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esq.

K

CALCUTTA:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXXXV.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF

DEVONSHIRE.

Non perch' io creda bisognar miei carmi
A chi se ne fa copia da se stessa;
Ma sol per satisfare a questo mio
Che ho d' onorarla e di lodar disio.

ARIOSTO, Canto xxvii.

THE Great and Fair, in ev'ry age and clime,
Receive free homage from the Sons of Rhyme:
Bend, ye ambitious Bards, at Grandeur's shrine!
Be Power your patron! Wit and Beauty mine!—
To thee, whom elegance has taught to please
By serious dignity, or sportive ease;
Whom Virtue hails, at Pleasure's festive rites,
Chaste Arbiter of Art's refin'd delights:
To thee, fair DEVON! I breathe this votive strain;
Nor dread th' averted ear of proud Disdain:
For O, if music has not blest my lyre,
A lovelier spirit of th' ætherial choir,
Joy-breathing Gratitude, that hallow'd guest,
Who fires with heavenly zeal the human breast,

Bids my weak voice her ſwelling note prolong,
And conſecrate to thee her tributary ſong.
When firſt my anxious Muſe's fav'rite child,
Her young SERENA, artleſs, ſimple, wild,
Preſum'd from privacy's ſafe ſcenes to fly,
And met in giddy haſte the public eye;
Thy generous praiſe her trembling youth ſuſtain'd,
The ſmile ſhe dar'd not aſk, from thee ſhe gain'd;
And found a guardian in the gracious DEVON,
Kind as the regent of her fancied heaven.—
The flatter'd Muſe, whoſe offspring thou haſt bleſt,
In the fond pride that rules a parent's breaſt,
Preſents thus boldly to thy kind embrace
This little group of her ſucceeding race,
Bleſt! if by pathos true to Nature's law,
From thy ſoft boſom they may haply draw
Thoſe tender ſighs, that eloquently ſhew
The virtues of the heart from whence they flow!
Bleſt! if by foibles humorouſly hit
In the light ſcenes that aim at comic wit,
They turn thy penſive charms to mirthful grace,
And wake the ſprightly ſweetneſs of thy face!
While thus the proud Enthuſiaſt would aſpire
To change thy beauties with her changing lyre;
Much as ſhe wants the talent and the right,
To ſhew thy various charms in varied light,
O might the Muſe, intruding on thy bower,
From her fair Patron catch the magic power!
Frequent to meet the public eye, and ſtill
That fickle eye with fond amazement fill!
Let her, if this vain wiſh is loſt in air,
Breathe from her grateful heart a happier prayer!

Howe'er her different fables may give birth
To fancied woe, and viſionary mirth;
May all thy griefs belong to Fiction's reign,
And wound thee only with a pleaſing pain!
May thy light ſpirit, on the ſea of life,
Elude the rocks of care, the guſts of ſtrife,
And ſafely, as the never-ſinking buoy,
Float on th' unebbing flood of real joy!

EARTHAM,
January 29, 1784.

W. HAYLEY.

PERSONS

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

SIR NICHOLAS ODDFISH,

SAPPHIC,

DECISIVE,

MORLEY,

COLONEL FELIX,

JONATHAN, Servant to MORLEY;

SELINA, Niece to Sir NICHOLAS,

MRS. FELIX, her Couſin, and Wife to the COLONEL,

JENNY, Servant to SELINA.

Servants of Sir NICHOLAS, &c.

SCENE, *the Country Manſion of the* ODDFISH *Family.*

THE

HAPPY PRESCRIPTION.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

Enter Sir Nicholas, *in debate with* Mrs. Felix *and* Selina.

Mrs. Felix.

WHAT a ſtrange declaration!—it gives me the ſpleen;
But 'tis what good Sir Nicholas never can mean.

Sir Nicholas.

Not mean it, fair lady!—By Jupiter, yes!
And my project, you'll ſee, will be crown'd with ſucceſs;
I am joyous myſelf, and 'tis ever my plan
To give thoſe I love all the joy that I can.

Mrs. Felix.

We own it—but joy is like diet, dear couſin,
One palate mayn't reliſh what pleaſes a dozen;
Nor will I allow that my appetite's vicious,
If, perchance, I don't like what you think moſt delicious.

Sir

Sir NICHOLAS.

Rare dainty diſtinctions!—But can I believe
That a woman e'er liv'd, ſince the wedding of Eve,
Whoſe heart (tho' moſt coyly her head might be carried)
Did not fervently wiſh to be ſpeedily married?
Not to wound your nice ears with the name of deſires
Which youth renders lovely, and nature inſpires,
Your ſex, from its weakneſs demands a defender,
Whom pride and affection make watchful and tender;
And if my fair Coz is no hypocrite grown,
The truth of my maxims you'll honeſtly own;
While the wars from your arms the brave Colonel detain,
Is the want of a huſband the ſource of no pain?

Mrs. FELIX.

There, indeed, you have touch'd me a little too near,
My Soldier, you know, to my ſoul is moſt dear,
I own—and my frankneſs you never will blame,
I'd purchaſe his preſence with ought but his fame.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Well ſaid, thou dear, honeſt, and warm-hearted wife;
For thy truth may good angels ſtill watch o'er his life!
And while others the rough field of ſlaughter are treading,
Send him home full of glory, to dance at our wedding!
For a wedding we'll have to enliven us all,
And Hymen's bright altar ſhall warm the old hall.
For my Niece ere I die 'tis my wiſh to provide,
And ere two months are paſt I *will* ſee her a bride.
I'm reſolv'd—and you know that my neighbours all ſay,
Sir Nicholas Oddfiſh will have his own way.

Mrs. FELIX.

Selina, dear Sir, wants no other protection,
While her life glides in peace by your gentle direction.

She

She thinks, and, I own, I approve her remark:
In conjugal cares 'tis too ſoon to embark:
Her boſom untouch'd by Love's dangerous dart,
Fate has not yet ſhewn her the man of her heart.

Sir NICHOLAS.

The man of her heart!—theſe nonſenſical fancies
You light-headed females pick out of romances.
That I am no tyrant you know very well,
So Couſin don't teach my good Niece to rebel!
I am no greedy guardian, who thinks it his duty
On the altar of Plutus to ſacrifice beauty;
Whoſe venal barbarity, juſtly abhorr'd,
Ties a lovely young girl to an old crippled lord,
And baſely, to gain either rank or eſtate,
Makes her ſwear ſhe will love, what ſhe cannot but hate.
From ſuch a protector Heaven guard my dear Niece!
I wiſh her to wed that her joys may increaſe;
And the deuce muſt be in the ſtrange girl who diſcovers
No man to her mind in ſuch plenty of lovers.
To no very great length will my cruelty run,
If from twenty admirers I bid her chuſe one.

Mrs. FELIX.

But why, dear Sir Nicholas, why in ſuch haſte?

Sir NICHOLAS.

'Tis thus that my projects are ever diſgrac'd
With the falſe names of hurry and precipitation,
Becauſe I abhor ſilly procraſtination;
That thief of delight, who deludes all our ſenſes,
Who cheats us for ever with idle pretences,
By whom, like the dog in the fable, betray'd,
We let go the ſubſtance to ſnap at the ſhade.

To ſeize preſent Time is the true Art of Life;
'Tis Time who now cries, make Selina a Wife!
The ſeaſon is come, I've ſo long wiſh'd to ſee,
From the moment I dandled her firſt on my knee;
She, you know, to my care was bequeath'd by my Brother,
And having this Child, I ne'er wiſh'd for another:
Thro' life I have kept myſelf ſingle for her;
Her intereſt, her joy, to my own I prefer.

SELINA.

Your kindneſs, dear Sir, I can never repay.

Sir NICHOLAS.

In truth, my dear damſel, you eaſily may;
I demand no return ſo enormouſly great;
I aſk but a Boy to poſſeſs my eſtate.

SELINA.

Lord, Uncle, how come ſuch odd thoughts in your head?

Mrs. FELIX,

From his heart, I aſſure you—'tis pleaſantly ſaid;
A fair ſtipulation—both parties agreed,
The compact, I truſt, in due time will ſucceed;
But patience, dear Knight, you will have your deſire,
Nor wait very long for a young little 'Squire.

Sir NICHOLAS.

The cold ſtream of Patience ne'er creeps in my veins,
But the wiſh my heart forms my quick ſpirit attains.
I'm none of your chill atmoſpherical wretches,
Whoſe affections are ſubject to ſtarts and to catches;
Whoſe wiſh, like a weather-cock, veering about,
Now turns towards hope, and now changes to doubt;
No, mine, like the needle without variation,
Only looks to one point, and that point's Conſummation.

I want

I want to behold this young Urchin ariſe,
Before I have loſt or my legs or my eyes,
That I may enjoy all his little vagaries,
As the changeable ſeaſon of infancy varies.
I long to be moulding his heart and his ſpirit,
To ſhew him the fields he is born to inherit;
Lead him round our rich woods, while my limbs are yet limber,
And tell the young rogue, how I've nurs'd up his timber;
That when the worn thread of my life is untwiſted,
He long may remember that I have exiſted:
And when my old frame in our monument reſts,
As he walks by my grave with a few worthy gueſts,
He thus to ſome warm-hearted friend may addreſs him,
Here lies my odd, honeſt, old Uncle—God bleſs him!

Mrs. FELIX.

Thank Heaven, dear Couſin, your hale conſtitution
Shews not the leaſt ſign of a near diſſolution.

SELINA.

To make your life happy, whate'er the condition,
Has been, my dear Uncle, my higheſt ambition;
To fulfil every wiſh that your fancy can frame,
Still is, as it ought to be, ever my aim:
But if by your voice I am doom'd to the altar,
With terror and pain my weak accents muſt falter,
Unleſs my kind ſtars a new lover ſhould ſend me,
Unlike all the ſwains who now deign to attend me.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Nice wench! do you want the whole world to adore you?
Would you have all the men of the earth rang'd before you?
For, thanks to your charms, and to fortune's kind bounty,
You may rank in your train all the youth of our county,

And chuſe whom you will; if the man has but worth,
And is nearly your equal in wealth and in birth,
I give my conſent—you are free from reſtriction;
But I will not be plagu'd with perverſe contradiction.
I will ſee you wed without any delay:
Your two fitteſt lovers are coming to-day;
Young Sapphic, whoſe verſes delight all the fair,
And Dicky Deciſive, Sir Jacob's next heir:
Both young and both wealthy, both comely and clever,
To gain you, no doubt, each will warmly endeavour;
For they come for a month, by my own invitation,
On purpoſe to ſound my dear girl's inclination:
I have ſaid to them both, and no man can ſpeak fairer,
Let him, who can pleaſe her moſt, win her and wear her.

SELINA, *aſide to* Mrs. Felix.

Good angels defend me!

Mrs. FELIX.

I ſee nothing frightful:
Our month with ſuch gueſts muſt be very delightful:
When Sapphic's ſoft verſes incline us to doſe,
Dick will keep us awake with ſatirical proſe.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Don't croſs me, I ſay! nor miſlead my good Niece!
By Jove, if ſhe thwarts me with any caprice,
Like a certain old juſtice I'll ring up my maids,
And marry the firſt of the frank-hearted jades;
For perverſe contradiction I never will bear,
But provide for myſelf a more dutiful heir.

Mrs. FELIX.

Dear Couſin, in ſpite of his worſhip's deciſion,
You cannot be certain of ſuch a proviſion:

Attempts

Attempts of that nature are ſubject to fail.

Sir NICHOLAS.

My deſigns you ſhall ſee, Madam, always prevail:
For if this nice Gipſy, by your machination,
Declines every offer, to give me vexation,
Like my late jolly neighbour, Sir Timothy Trickum,
Who vindictively married the frail Molly Quickum,
I'll make ſure of the matter, and chuſe me a wife,
With an heir ready plac'd on the threſhold of life:
For, as I have ſaid, tho' a foe to reſtriction,
I never will ſuffer perverſe contradiction.
You now know my mind, which no maſk ever covers,
So farewell, and prepare to receive your two lovers. [*Exit.*

Mrs. FELIX.

Go thy way, thou ſtrange mixture of ſenſe and of blindneſs!
A model at once of oppreſſion and kindneſs.
Thy will, thou odd compound of goodneſs and whim,
Is a ſtream, againſt which it is treaſon to ſwim;
Yet we muſt croſs the current—

SELINA.

Dear Couſin ſay how!

Direct oppoſition he will not allow:
What can you deviſe as a plan of prevention?
How divert his keen ſpirit from this new intention?
I had much rather die than be ever united
To one of the lovers, that he has invited:
My heart has a thorough averſion to both:
Yet to make him unhappy I'm equally loth;
When I think what I owe to his tender protection,
The worſt of all ills is to loſe his affection.

Mrs.

Mrs. Felix.

Dear Girl, your warm gratitude gives you new charms:
'Tis an amiable fear, which your boſom alarms,
And I from your Uncle's quick humour would ſcreen you,
Nor looſen the bands of affection between you.
He merits your love, and you know he has mine;
Yet we ſomehow muſt baffle his haſty deſign,
Nor ſuffer his whim thus to make you a Wife,
To repent the raſh buſineſs the reſt of his life.
Take courage! kind Chance may aſſiſt us—

Selina.

I doubt it,
Yet Heaven knows how we ſhall manage without it;
For when his heart's ſet on a favorite ſcheme,
His ardor and haſte, as you know, are extreme,
Like a med'cine ill-tim'd oppoſition is vain,
And inflames the diſorder 'twas meant to reſtrain.

Mrs. Felix.

In his fevers indeed there is no intermiſſion:
And thanks, gentle Coz! to your ſoft diſpoſition!
So ſweet and compliant your temper has been,
You have taught him to think contradiction a ſin;
And here all around him confirm that belief,
His vaſſals all bow to the nod of their chief.
Here ſhut from the world in this rural dominion,
No mortal oppoſes his will or opinion;
And thus he is ſpoil'd—Politicians all ſay,
Human nature's not faſhion'd for abſolute ſway.

Selina.

'Tis true, tho' the world, as you ſay, think him odd,
In this ſphere he is held a diminutive god:

And

And when I behold how his fortune is ſpent,
In ſuppreſſing vexation, and ſpreading content;
When I hear all the poor his kind bounty expreſſing,
And thoroughly know how he merits their bleſſing,
My feelings with theirs in his eulogy join,
And confeſs, that his nature is truly divine.

Mrs. Felix.

Thou excellent Girl! if ſuch fondneſs and zeal
For a warm-hearted, whimſical Uncle you feel,
With what fine ſenſations your boſom will glow,
What tender attachment your temper will ſhew,
When your fortunate lord Love and Hymen inveſt
With higher dominion o'er that gentle breaſt!
But tell me, dear Couſin—be honeſt—declare,
Has no young ſecret ſwain form'd an intereſt there?
I ſuſpect—but don't let my ſuſpicion affright you,
Tho' the good Knight's rare virtues amuſe and delight you,
From this gloomy old hall you would wiſh to get free,
Had not Cupid preſerv'd you from feeling *ennui*;
Come, tell me the name of the favorite youth:
I am ſure I gueſs right.

Selina.

No, in ſad ſober truth
I never have ſeen in the courſe of my life,
A mortal to whom I ſhould chuſe to be wife.

Mrs. Felix.

Ye ſtars, what a pity!—I wiſh I could learn
That my Colonel from India would ſhortly return,
Both for your ſake and mine; for our preſent diſtreſs
He would ſpeedily turn into joyous ſucceſs;
As his regiment muſt ſome young hero afford,
Who might throw at your feet both himſelf and his ſword.
What ſay you, my dear, to a ſoldier?—

Enter

Enter Jenny.

JENNY.

Oh! Madam,
Here's young Mr. Sapphic—I vow, if I had them,
I'd give fifty pounds had you ſeen how politely
He beg'd me to tie a ſweet noſegay up tightly,
Which is jolted to pieces—well, he's a ſweet beau;
And now with his pencil he's writing below,
I believe 'tis a poſy, he writes it ſo neatly,
And I'm ſure 'tis fine verſe, Ma'am, it ſounded ſo ſweetly.

MRS. FELIX.

Oh charming! His vows will be very ſublime,
And I truſt we ſhall hear his propoſals in rhyme.

SELINA.

How can you, dear Couſin, ſo cruelly jeſt in
A buſineſs you know I am really diſtreſt in?
I ſhall certainly forfeit my Uncle's protection,
For I never can wed where I feel no affection.
Do help me.

MRS. FELIX.

Good Girl, this perplexity ſmother,
And think your two lovers will baniſh each other:
There's much to be hop'd from our preſent affairs.

JENNY.

O, Ma'am, Mr. Sapphic is coming up ſtairs.

(Aſide as ſhe goes out.)

I am mightily pleas'd with this marrying plan,
And I hope in my ſpirit that he'll be the man. [*Exit.*

Enter Sapphic.

SAPPHIC.

Fair Ladies, the moments have ſeem'd to be hours,
While I ſtopt in your hall to adjuſt a few flowers:

For

For the ſeaſon, I'm told, they're uncommonly fine;
But I ſtill wiſh the tribute more worthy the ſhrine.

[*Bowing and preſenting them to* Selina.

SELINA.

Mr. Sapphic is always extremely polite:
Theſe roſes, indeed, are a wonderful ſight;
You are far better floriſts than we are.

Mrs. FELIX.

My dear,
Mr. Sapphic has magic to make them appear,
And Flora is brib'd by the ſongs he compoſes
To produce for her poet extempore roſes;
Into this early bloom all her plants are bewitch'd:
But you do not obſerve how the gift is inrich'd,
Here's a border of verſe, if my eyes don't deceive me.

SELINA, *aſide to* Mrs. Felix.

Dear Couſin you'll read it—I pray you relieve me;
I ſhall bluſh like a fool at each civil expreſſion.

Mrs. Felix, *aſide to* Selina, *taking the paper.*

Now with emphaſis juſt and with proper diſcretion.

(Mrs. Felix *reads.*)

" Ye happy flowers give and receive perfume
" As on Selina's fragrant breaſt ye bloom:
" From earth, tho' not arrang'd in order nice,
" Ye are tranſplanted into Paradiſe;
" If on that ſpot ye languiſh into death,
" 'Twill be from envy of her ſweeter breath."

'Tis a delicate compliment, tender and pretty,
What original ſpirit! how graceful and witty!

SAPPHIC.

Dear Ma'am, you're too good to find any thing in it,
'Tis a mere haſty trifle—the work of a minute:
On the anvil I had not a moment to hammer,
And I fear, in my haſte I have ſinn'd againſt grammar.

Mrs. FELIX.

All ſlight imperfections I never regard
When I meet with ſuch vigor of thought in a bard,
With a fancy ſo brilliant—

SAPPHIC.

O! Ma'am, you're too kind;
But candor's the teſt of an amiable mind.
I wiſh that your taſte all our Critics might guide,
To ſoften that rigor with which they decide.

Mrs. FELIX.

From Critics, dear Sir, you have litttle to fear.
If Mr. Deciſive himſelf had been here,
He muſt have been charm'd with this ſweet *jeu d'eſprit*,
Which, as he is coming to-day, he ſhall ſee.
I am eager to hear how his wit will applaud it;
To conceal it would be of due praiſe to defraud it.

SAPPHIC.

In Mercy's name, Ladies, I beg your protection,
Preſerve my poor rhymes from Deciſive's inſpection;
Conſider how haſty—

Mrs. FELIX.

Say rather how ſprightly.—

SAPPHIC.

Compos'd in a moment—

Mrs. FELIX.

Produc'd ſo politely!

SAPPHIC.

SAPPHIC.

He'll cut them to atoms!

Mrs. FELIX.

Dear Sir, he's your friend,

And I thought he had seen all the poems you pen'd:

I was told that to him your long works you rehearse—

Does Mr. Decisive himself write in verse?

SAPPHIC.

I wish from my soul that he did now and then;

But he uses the pen-knife much more than the pen,

And too freely has slash'd all who write in the nation,

To give them an opening for retaliation.

My old friend Decisive has honour and wit;

To the latter, indeed, he makes most things submit;

And thinks it fair sport, as a friend or a foe,

To knock down a Bard by a flaming *bon mot*.

To your sex indeed his chief failings I trace;

For the fair-ones so flatter'd his figure and face,

That too early he ceas'd the chaste Muses to follow,

And being Adonis, would not be Apollo.

Mrs. FELIX.

Yet he has much fancy.

SAPPHIC.

O, Madam, no doubt,

And genius that study would soon have brought out.

Had his thoughts been less turn'd to his legs and his looks,

Ere this he'd have written some excellent books:

'Tis pity such parts should thro' indolence fall;

But he never composes, and reads not at all.

SELINA.

Not read, Mr. Sapphic! you surely mistake;

Your friend cannot be an illiterate rake:

Our

Our neighbours, who lately from London came down,
Declare, that his word forms the taſte of the town!

SAPPHIC.

Dear Madam, the buſineſs is eaſily done;
He judges all authors, but never reads one.

Mrs. FELIX.

I'm ſure he muſt own this *impromptu* is ſweet,
And I vow he ſhall read it—

SAPPHIC.

Dear Ma'am, I intreat,
I conjure you to ſpare me; this earneſt petition
I know you will grant me—

Mrs. FELIX,

On this one condition,
That for ſix lines ſuppreſs'd you indulge me with twenty:
Come, ſhew us your pocket-book—there you have plenty
Of tender poetical ſquibs for the Fair.

SAPPHIC, *taking out his pocket-book,*

Dear Ma'am here is nothing,

Mrs. FELIX,

A volume, I ſwear,
O, charming! well, now you're an excellent man;
'Tis ſtuff'd like a pincuſhion—

SAPPHIC.

Yes, Ma'am—with bran.

Mrs. FELIX.

Fie, fie, you're too modeſt, and murder my meaning;
What a harveſt is here! yet I aſk but a gleaning:
It would not be fair to ſeize all the collection,
Tho' all is moſt certainly worthy inſpection,

Indulge

Indulge us, dear Sir; come, I'll take no refuſal.

SAPPHIC.

Indeed, Ma'am, here's nothing that's fit for peruſal.

Mrs. FELIX.

There are fifty fine things, and one can't chuſe amiſs.

SAPPHIC, *taking out a paper,*

Here's one new little ſong—

Mrs. FELIX.

Well then, let me have this.

SAPPHIC, *after giving a paper.*

They all are ſo jumbled, I fear I am wrong;
I meant to have ſhewn you a new little ſong,
Which was written laſt week on the ball at our races,
Where I heard the Miſs Trotters compar'd to the Graces;
I could not help ſaying, t'was very profane,
It was taking the name of the Graces in vain.

Mrs. FELIX *reads.*

" *On ſeeing Selina and Jenny near each other in*
" *the garden.*"

O mercy, dear, Madam, you muſt not read thoſe!
A ſtanza unfiniſh'd.—

Mrs. FELIX.

How ſweetly it flows!
Selina, pray hear it.

SELINA, *aſide to* Mrs. FELIX.

Dear Couſin enough!
How can you delight in his horrible ſtuff!

Mrs. FELIX *reads.*

" Tho' each in the ſame garden blows,
" The poet muſt be crazy,
" Who, when invited by the roſe,
" Can ſtoop to pick the daiſy."

SELINA, *aside to* Mrs. FELIX.

If you love me, dear Couſin, aſſiſt me, I pray,
To end all this nonſenſe, and get him away.—
Pray, Sir, when you came, was my Uncle below?

SAPPHIC.

He's abroad, Ma'am, your ſervant inform'd me—

SELINA.

O No!
You have heard he is building a temple to Pan,
And we hope that your taſte may embelliſh the plan:
At the end of the walk, in his favourite grove,
Where there formerly ſtood an old ruin'd alcove,
You'll find him; and as 'tis an art you are ſkill'd in,
Twill pleaſe him to know what you think of the building.

Mrs. FELIX.

Aye do, Mr. Sapphic, inſpect what is done,
For the workmen all blunder'd when firſt they begun;
Your opinion I'm ſure will oblige the good Knight.

SELINA.

An inſcription, he once ſaid, he wiſh'd you to write.

SAPPHIC.

Dear Madam!—the hint is delightful, I vow;
To the God of Arcadia I haſten to bow:
I ſhall find the good Knight in the midſt of the dome;
I am heartily glad that he is not from home.
We ſhall ſurely contrive ſomething clever between us,
And the Muſe will compoſe by the order of Venus.

[*Bows tenderly to* Selina, *and exit.*

SELINA.

How could you ſo praiſe that impertinent creature?
And praiſe him without diſcompoſing a feature!—

I could

I could not have thought, before this converſation,
That your frankneſs could turn into ſuch adulation.

FELIX.

The World, my dear Child, is to you quite unknown;
When you ſee it you'll find ſuch diſcourſe is the *ton*;
Fine folks in high life learn to praiſe with great glee
Such perſons and things as they ſicken to ſee.
To me your beſt thanks for my ſpeeches are due—
By thus flattering the Poet, I ſurely ſerve you;
He will now play the Sky-lark inſtead of the Dove,
And ſtun me with ſongs, while you're far from his love.

Enter Jenny.

JENNY.

Dear Ma'am, now I hope Mr. Sapphic's quite bleſt,
For he flies thro' the walks like a bird to his neſt.—
He's a ſweet pretty gentleman.

Mrs. FELIX, *aſide to* Selina.

This, if I ſhew it,
Will ſoon baniſh Jenny's regard for the poet:—
Jenny, ſee what your friend Mr. Sapphic has written.

JENNY.

Dear Ma'am, with his verſes I always am ſmitten.

(Having read the ſtanza.)

A Daiſy indeed! to be ſure I am neat,
But tho' I'm a ſervant I hope I am ſweet.
When he makes my young Miſtreſs a Roſe or a Lilly,
He might turn me at leaſt to a Daffy-down-dilly.
But a Daiſy, forſooth! with no fragrance at all!—
I'll croſs him for this—

SELINA.

What's that noiſe in the hall?

JENNY.

JENNY.

As ſure as I live 'tis your other gay Spark,
For I ſaw a new chaiſe driving into the park.—
I'll ſee, Ma'am.

(*Aſide going out*)

I'll ſhew this fine Poet a trick—
A Daiſy! that no one but children will pick. [*Exit.*

Mrs. FELIX.

This ſimile Jenny I ſee cannot ſwallow,
And her anger may ruin this ſon of Apollo;
For in courtſhip this maxim is often diſplay'd,
He has half loſt the Miſtreſs who loſes the Maid.

Enter Deciſive.

DECISIVE.

Alone, my dear Ladies!—they told me below,
Our friend Sapphic was here, your poetical Beau;
I was almoſt afraid that my ſudden intruſion
Might check the rich ſtream of ſome lyric effuſion.

(*To* Selina.)

I'm happy to ſee you ſo lovely to-day;
But I hope I've not frighted your Poet away.

SELINA.

O no—Mr. Sapphic had bid us adieu—

Mrs. FELIX.

And not without ſaying ſome fine things of you:
He declares, that with thoſe brilliant parts you poſſeſs,
'Tis a ſin you ne'er ſend any work to the preſs.

DECISIVE.

Good Sapphic! In truth 'tis his comfort to think
The whole duty of man lies in ſpilling of ink;

And

And at Paradiſe gate his large volumes of metre
Will I hope be allow'd a fair paſs by Saint Peter.

Mrs. FELIX.

Then the Saint muſt be free from your critical ſpirit,
For I know you have little eſteem for their merit;
You're a rigorous judge, and to poets terrific.

DECISIVE.

I wiſh my friend's muſe was not quite ſo prolific:
But in rhymes when a child I have heard he would ſqueak,
And ſo proved a poet before he could ſpeak;
On his death-bed, I doubt not, he'll ſtill think of verſe,
And groan out a rhyme to his doctor or nurſe.

Mrs. FELIX.

I fancy your favourite reading is proſe;
Here's a new ſet of travels, pray have you read thoſe?

DECISIVE, *taking the book.*

This author is lucky to meet with a buyer:
A traveller's but a ſoft word for a liar.
Such works may pleaſe thoſe who have ne'er been abroad,
But men, who have travell'd, perceive all the fraud.

Mrs. FELIX.

Is the work ſo deceitful! it ſeems you have read it?

DECISIVE.

Not a ſyllable, Madam—

Mrs. FELIX.

Pray who then has ſaid it?

DECISIVE.

Not a ſoul that I know—but ſuch books are a trade,
And I perfectly know how thoſe volumes are made.

Mrs. Felix.

'Tis a work, I am told, that has great reputation
Both for wit and for truth—

Decisive.

We 're a credulous nation—

Mrs. Felix.

Pray what kind of books are your favourite ſtudy?

Decisive.

I find modern works only make the brain muddy,
As my friends grew by reading more awkward than wiſe,
And ruin'd their perſons and clouded their eyes;
I have wiſely reſolv'd not to read any more,
Since each living author is turn'd to a *bore*.

Mrs. Felix.

How can you ſo waſte all your bright mental powers?
'Tis pity you men have not ſuch works as ours—
What d'ye ſay to my knotting?

(*Takes out her work.*)

Decisive.

Your box wants a hinge.
And I'll give you a much better pattern for fringe;
I brought it from France.

Mrs. Felix.

Now I ſee, my good friend,
There is no kind of work which your ſkill cannot mend:
In all arts you poſſeſs a diſtinguiſhing head,
From building a temple to knotting a thread.

Decisive.

A-propos of a temple—pray has the good Knight
Rais'd his altar to Pan?—he had fix'd on the ſite,
Is the ſtructure begun?—I have not ſeen his plan—

Mrs.

Mrs. FELIX.

Then haſten, and pay your devotions to Pan.
Sir Nicholas now in his veſtibule ſtands,
To guide all his workmen and quicken their hands;
And Sapphic is gone to attend the good Knight,
And try what inſcription his genius can write.

DECISIVE.

Poor Pan! by the Graces thou'rt left in the lurch;
Thy temple will look like a trim pariſh church,
With Sapphic's inſcriptions, like ſcraps of the Bible
Put up, as the Church-wardens ſay, in a *libel*.

Mrs. FELIX.

Indeed we much fear ſo—pray haſte to inſpect it,
And exert all your exquiſite taſte to correct it.

DECISIVE.

Ma'am I'll do what I can, for it puts me in wrath
To ſee a fine temple diſgrac'd by a Goth. [*Exit.*

Mrs. FELIX.

Well, my dear, your two Lovers, like true men of faſhion,
Do not peſter you much with the heat of their paſſion:
You'll be quite at your eaſe—thanks to Pan and the Muſe!

Enter Jenny, *haſtily*.

JENNY.

News! news! my dear Ladies, moſt excellent news!

SELINA.

The girl is quite wild!

Mrs. FELIX.

What tranſports you ſo, Jenny?

JENNY.

I've news for you, Madam, that's well worth a guinea;

I have news from the Colonel—

Mrs. FELIX.

A letter! Where is it?

JENNY.

No, Ma'am, here's a ſtranger arriv'd on a viſit,
And he comes from the place where the Colonel is fighting.

Mrs. FELIX.

And with letters for me?

JENNY.

Madam, that I'm not right in;
For I run from his man when I got half my ſtory;
But the Colonel, he ſays, is all riches and glory.

Mrs. FELIX.

Dear girl that's enough; through my life I ſhall feel
Due regard for thy warm and affectionate zeal.
But where is this Stranger?

JENNY.

Juſt walk'd to my Maſter.
His poor man has met with a cruel diſaſter;
He was wounded in battle.

SELINA.

Pray treat him with care.—
In your joy, my dear Couſin, I heartily ſhare.

Mrs. FELIX.

This Stranger's a jewel for you from the Eaſt;
He's a Captain, I hope, my dear Jenny, at leaſt.

JENNY.

Ah, Madam! my fancy ſuppos'd him ſo too;
But we're both in the wrong, and for Miſs he won't do,
For I learnt from his man he is only a Doctor.

Mrs. FELIX.

Poor Jane, how the difference of title has ſhock'd her!

For

For my part I can't find by my reaſon or feeling,
That the art of deſtroying excels that of healing:
We may equally love the profeſſors of both.

JENNY.

That Miſs tho' ſhould marry a Doctor I'm loth.

Mrs. FELIX.

Come, my dear, let us meet 'em—I can't reſt above—
How ſlowly fly letters from hands that we love!

End of Act I.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

Enter Jenny *and* Jonathan.

JENNY.

COME, dear Mr. Jonathan, tell me the whole;
An account of a battle I love to my ſoul;
There is nothing on earth I ſo truly delight in,
As to hear a brave Soldier diſcourſe about fighting.—
So the Colonel was wounded you ſay near the wall:
Whereabouts was the ſhot? Did he inſtantly fall?

JONATHAN.

No; recoiling a little he ruſh'd on again,
And fought like a lion, made fiercer by pain;

Tho'

Tho' a curſed keen arrow an Indian let fly,
Pierc'd the bone of his cheek juſt below the right eye.
'Twas a horrible wound! but it could not appal him.

JENNY.

O mercy! that ſuch a hard fate ſhould befal him.
Alas! I'm afraid that his fine manly face
Muſt have loſt by the ſcar all its ſpirit and grace.
Does he look very hideous?

JONATHAN.

No; thanks to my Maſter,
You can hardly perceive that he e'er wore a plaiſter.
There never was known a more wonderful cure;
But kind Heaven aſſiſts my good Maſter I'm ſure;
Without it the ſkill of no mortal could ſave
The many brave lads he has kept from the grave.
You would weep with delight to behold him ſurrounded
With a hundred fine fellows once horribly wounded;
Who with thanks for their lives are ſtill eager to greet him,
And hail him with bleſſings whenever they meet him.

JENNY.

God reward him, ſay I, for the good he has done;
And of thoſe he has ſav'd I am glad you are one.

JONATHAN.

Aye, twice he preſerv'd me when all thought me dead,
And once brought me off at the riſque of his head.
It was not his buſineſs to mix in the ſtrife,
And ſome thought him mad when he ventur'd his life
To bring off a poor mangled private like me;
But I've ſtill a heart left in this trunk that you ſee,
Which loves the brave ſpirit who ſnatch'd me from death,
And will ſerve him, I hope, till my very laſt breath.

JENNY.

JENNY.

Your ſcenes of hard ſervice I hope are all over;
It is now fairly time you ſhould both live in clover.
Your Maſter, I truſt, has brought home as much treaſure
As will make him a parliament-man at his pleaſure;
And to recompence you for the wound in your arm,
Perhaps he will buy you a ſnug little farm.

JONATHAN.

When a Gentleman comes from the Eaſt, my good girl,
You all think he is loaded with diamonds and pearl;
You fancy his treaſure too great to be told,
And ſuppoſe he poſſeſſes a mountain of gold.
A few daring blades, by a bold kind of ſtealth,
Have indeed from the Indies brought home ſo much wealth,
That with all their keen ſenſes they ne'er could employ it:
And have dy'd from the want of a heart to enjoy it:
But ſome hundred brave lads, whom gay youth led to enter
That promiſing region of hope and adventure,
Have toil'd many years in thoſe rich-burning climes,
With ſmall ſhare of their wealth, and with none of their crimes,
Now my Maſter and I both belong to this tribe;
Not a ſingle Nabob have we kill'd for a bribe;
And to tell you a truth, which I hope you'll not doubt,
We're as poor and as honeſt as when we ſet out.

JENNY.

What! your Maſter ſtill poor in ſo thriving a trade!
And with patients ſo rich has he never been paid
For the wounds he has heal'd?

JONATHAN.

Yes, my dear, for his fees
I know he has touch'd many thouſand rupees;

But

But the ſight of diſtreſs he could never endure;
What he took from the rich he beſtow'd on the poor.

JENNY.

Well, Heaven will pay him, no doubt, in due ſeaſon.
But what brings him home?—I would fain know the reaſon
Why he leaves that rich land in the bloom of his life:
I ſuppoſe from the want of a cherry-cheek'd wife?
They ſay thoſe black wenches are ſad naſty creatures,
And tho' they've fine ſhapes they have horrible features.
Does he want a white ſweet-heart? or has he a black?

JONATHAN.

'Tis indeed a white woman that brings us both back:
But alas! 'tis an old one—my Maſter, it ſeems,
Has a fond ſimple mother that's troubled with dreams,
And he, like a tender and ſoft-hearted youth,
Reſigns his fine proſpect, and comes home forſooth
Becauſe the old dame has expreſs'd her deſires
To ſee him in England before ſhe expires:
And egad ſince he's come ſhe will live long enough,
For ſhe ſeems to be made of good durable ſtuff.

JENNY.

Well, now I ſhall love him a hundred times more
Than I did for the ſtories you told me before.
God bleſs the kind ſoul! who behaves to his mother
As if he well knew he could ne'er have another;
And were he my ſon I could not live without him;
I could ſtay here all day while you're talking about him.—
But 'tis time to be gone; we muſt both diſappear,
For the Colonel's ſweet Wife and your Maſter are here.

JONATHAN.

Stop, I muſt peep at her;—ſhe's as bright as the day!

JENNY.

JENNY.

And her heart is as good as her ſpirit is gay—
Come I'll ſhew you our walks—we may get out this way.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter Mrs. Felix *and* Morley.

Mrs. FELIX.

Dear excellent Friend, ſince I owe to your worth
The ſafety of what I moſt value on earth,
With thoſe it loves beſt my heart yields you a place,
And I claſp your kind hand with a ſiſter's embrace.
To judge of the man whom ſuch ſervice endears
I want not the tardy acquaintance of years,
But in ſtrong tho' quick ties, that no chances can ſever,
In an inſtant he ſeizes my friendſhip for ever:
And had I much leſs obligation to you,
My regard and eſteem I ſhould ſtill think your due,
From the picture my Felix has drawn of your mind.

MORLEY.

His warm ſoul to his friends is moſt partially kind;
But ſuch as I am I moſt truly am yours;
Your goodneſs my grateful attachment enſures,
And my heart with proud tranſport your friendſhip embraces;
Tho' I ne'er gaz'd before on your perſonal graces,
I've beguil'd ſome long weeks of hard weariſome duty
With frequent diſcourſe on your virtues and beauty;
And I own for the Colonel it rais'd my eſteem,
To mark with what pleaſure he dwelt on the theme.

Mrs. FELIX.

You're an excellent creature to ſooth a fond Wife,
Who regards her Lord's love hardly leſs than his life;

But ſince you've replied with good humour ſo ſteady
To the ten thouſand queſtions I've aſk'd you already,
I'll ſpare you to-day, and if 'tis in my power
Mention Felix's name only once in an hour.
That my thoughts to the Indies no longer may roam,
Let me talk to you now about matches at home;
Your counſel may make our perplexity leſs,
And finiſh our odd tragi-comic diſtreſs.
Firſt tell me, and ſpeak without any diſguiſe,
(Tho' I fancy I read all your thoughts in your eyes)
What d'ye think of my Couſin?

MORLEY.

Her graces indeed
The glowing deſcription of Felix exceed;
Tho' in praiſing her, oft he with pleaſure has ſmil'd
Like a father deſcribing his favourite child.
For my part, I think ſhe is laviſhly bleſt
With thoſe beauties by which the pure mind is expreſt,
That her heart is with truth and with tenderneſs warm,
That ſweet ſenſibility ſhines in her form;
A form, on which no man his eye ever turn'd
Without feeling his breaſt in her welfare concern'd,
'Tis the lot of ſuch graces, wherever they dwell,
None can ſee their ſoft miſtreſs and not wiſh her well.

Mrs. FELIX.

Very gallantly ſaid, and the praiſe is her due—
But how came her Lovers ſo well known to you?

MORLEY.

Her Lovers!—dear Madam, I hope you're in jeſt—
Or if by their vows your ſweet Friend is addreſt,
Heaven grant, for the peace of her delicate mind,
That her hand may be never to either reſign'd!

Mrs. FELIX.

From my ſoul I aſſure you I join in your prayer;
But whence does it ſpring?

MORLEY.

I will freely declare,
Tho' they're both men of fortune, fair birth, and good name,
With figures that ſet ſome young nymphs in a flame;
Tho' at each, many ladies are ready to catch
At what the world calls, a moſt excellent match;
Yet, if I have read your fair Couſin aright,
A boſom ſo tender, a ſpirit ſo bright,
Muſt be wretched with ſuch a companion for life,
As each of theſe Lovers would prove to his Wife.

Mrs. FELIX.

You are right; but their characters where could you know?

MORLEY.

I knew them at college a few years ago,
Before, by a whimſical odd ſort of fate,
And ſome family loſſes, too long to relate,
In Europe my views of proſperity ceas'd,
And chance ſent me forth to my friends in the Eaſt.

Mrs. FELIX.

Pray what ſort of youths were theſe two modiſh men?

MORLEY.

You now find them both what they ſeem'd to be then;
Two characters form'd like moſt young men of faſhion,
Whoſe cold ſelfiſh pride is their ſovereign paſſion;
In each, tho' they're men of an oppoſite turn,
The ſame heart-freezing vanity ſtill you diſcern,
To indulge that dear vanity, each ſtill diſplays
All the force of his mind, tho' in different ways.

Thence, in ſpinning weak verſe Sapphic's toil never ends,
And Deciſive ne'er ſtops in deriding his friends;
Each equally fancies no nymph can reſiſt
His lips, which he thinks all the Graces have kiſt.

Mrs. FELIX.

Perfect knowledge of both your juſt picture has ſhown!—
The warmth of theſe Lovers diverts me, I own.
Of conqueſt each ſeems to himſelf very clear,
And feels from his rivals no diffident fear.
'Tis eaſy to ſee from their ſatisfied air,
Each loves his own perſon much more than the Fair.
But my poor gentle Coz wiſhes both at a diſtance;
And I want to contrive, by your friendly aſſiſtance,
To relieve her, and quietly ſend them from hence
Without the Knight's knowledge.

MORLEY.

As neither wants ſenſe,
Can't the Lady pronounce their diſmiſſion at once,
Which none can miſtake but an impudent dunce?

Mrs. FELIX.

This meaſure ſeems eaſy indeed at firſt view;
But alas! 'tis a meaſure we dare not purſue.
Our warm-hearted, whimſical, poſitive Knight,
Allows not to woman this natural right;
And hence my young Friend, in a pitiful caſe,
Knows not how to reject what ſhe ne'er can embrace;
For nothing her Uncle's reſentment would ſmother,
Should ſhe baniſh one ſuitor, and not take the other.

MORLEY.

Then indeed I am griev'd for the Lady's diſtreſs;
But how can I aid her?

Mrs. FELIX.

'Tis hard, I confeſs,

To a ſudden retreat this bold pair to oblige,
And make two ſuch Heroes abandon a ſiege;
Yet I wiſh we could do it—and when they recede,
The departure of both muſt appear their own deed.

MORLEY, *after a pauſe.*

Well—my friendſhip for you has ſuggeſted a ſcheme,

Mrs. FELIX.

'Tis a ſervice our hearts will for ever eſteem.
But what is your project?

MORLEY.

Don't queſtion me what,
Leſt you think me a fool for too ſimple a plot:
'Tis ſimple, and yet I would venture my life
It will drive from theſe Beaus all the thoughts of a Wife;
And if my ſcheme proſpers, with joy I'll confeſs
What a whimſical trifle produc'd our ſucceſs.

Mrs. FELIX.

Well, keep your own ſecret, if ſilence is beſt;
Tho' a woman, for once I'll in ignorance reſt.—
Here comes our friend Sapphic—he ſeems in a flurry.

MORLEY.

His ſtep ſhews indeed a poetical hurry,
And we ſhall be call'd in as Goſſips, fair neighbour,
For by the Bard's buſtle his Muſe is in labour.

Enter Sapphic,

SAPPHIC.

Dear Ma'am! may I aſk you for paper and ink,
Leſt a freſh *jeu d'eſprit* in oblivion ſhould ſink?
For when my free fancy has brought forth my verſe,
My treacherous memory proves a bad nurſe.

Mrs.

Mrs. FELIX.

O pray! for your Muſe let us rear her young chit,
For the bantling no doubt muſt have ſpirit and wit;
As a cradle to hold it, I beg you'll take that,
(giving him a paper.)
And your Friend here will aid you in dreſſing the Brat;
At a rite ſo important I merit no place,
And I beg to withdraw while you're waſhing its face. *Exit.*

SAPPHIC.

That's a charming gay Creature—luxuriant and young—
But I've loſt half a ſtanza—the deuce take her tongue;—
Let me ſee—let me ſee if I can't recollect it.—
'Tis done;—and now, Morley, pray hear or inſpect it.

MORLEY.

The Poet himſelf his own verſe ſhould recite.

SAPPHIC.

You're a ſenſible fellow—your maxim is right.
(Reads.)
" Thy old Arcadia, Pan, reſign,
" For this more rich retreat:
" A fairer nymph here decks thy ſhrine;
" Be this thy fav'rite ſeat."
Well, my Friend, won't this bring the old God out of Greece?

MORLEY.

Aye, and make good Sir Nicholas give you his Niece.

SAPPHIC.

Yes, I fancy this ſtanza will make the Girl mine.

MORLEY.

What Poet can wiſh for a prize more divine?
I give you much Joy on your conqueſt, my Friend;
Yet the eyes of regret on your nuptials I bend,

And

And grieve in reflecting, that conjugal joy
Your poetical harveſt of Fame muſt deſtroy.

SAPPHIC.

What the deuce do you mean?

MORLEY.

To thoſe great works adieu
Which the world now expects with impatience from you.
The Poet when bleſt can no more be ſublime,
And a chill matrimonial muſt ſtrike thro' his rhyme.

SAPPHIC.

You're miſtaken, dear Doctor—connubial delight
Will give a new zeſt to each poem I write;
And you'll ſee ſuch productions!—

MORLEY.

'Tis true, now and then
Polemics by marriage have quicken'd their pen.
A Dutch Critic I knew, by the aid of his Wife,
Made a book and a child every year of his life.
But total ſeclusion from Venus and Bacchus,
Is, you know, to the Bard recommended by Flaccus.
A grand epic poem I hear you are writing;
'Tis a work that your country will take great delight in:
But conſider, my Friend, when you're deep in heroics,
As Poets have not all the patience of Stoics,
How you'll grieve to be check'd in the flow of your verſe,
By a young ſqualling child and an old ſcolding nurſe;
E'en the qualms of your Lady may drive from your brain
Fine thoughts that you ne'er can recover again;
Reflect how you'll feel, with ſuch hopes of ſucceeding,
If your Muſe ſhould miſcarry becauſe your Wife's breeding.

SAPPHIC.

SAPPHIC.

Egad, in that caſe I ſhould think my fate hard.

MORLEY.

I myſelf have beheld an unfortunate Bard,
Who his nails for a rhyme unſucceſsfully bit,
When family cares had extinguiſh'd his wit.
With many who ſing in the Muſe's full choir,
It would do them no miſchief to muffle their lyre;
But for you, whom the Nine, with a tender preſage,
Are prepar'd to proclaim the firſt Bard of our age;
For you, who of Taſte are the favourite theme—

SAPPHIC.

Yes, I think I ſtand high in the public eſteem.—

MORLEY.

For you, I ſhould grieve if domeſtic delight
On your fair riſing laurels ſhould fall as a blight.
'Tis the pride of great minds whom the Muſes inflame,
To ſacrifice joy on the altar of Fame!
Your paſſion's renown—of this Girl are you fonder?—
On this delicate point I muſt leave you to ponder;
Conſider it, while I attend the old Knight. [*Exit.*

SAPPHIC *alone* (*after a pauſe.*)

By Jove, I believe my friend Morley is right.
Thou, Fame, art my Miſtreſs; to win thee I ſing.
This Girl, tho' ſhe's handſome, is but a dull thing.
'Tis clear, whenſoe'er I a poem rehearſe,
That ſhe has no reliſh for elegant verſe.—
Her fortune indeed would be rather convenient,
But the glorious to me is before the expedient.
Egad I'd quit Venus herſelf, if I knew
That the ſyſtem of Morley was certainly true.

I don't

I don't think the Girl to Deciſive inclin'd;
But here comes her Maid, who may tell me her mind.

Enter Jenny.

My good little Jenny, you're truſty and true,
And your Miſtreſs, I know, tells her ſecrets to you.
What you know, to a friend you may ſafely impart;
And give me a perfect account of her heart:
Pray how do I ſtand in your Lady's regard?

JENNY.

Now's my time to be even with this ſaucy Bard. — *(aſide.)*
To be ſure, Sir, the taſte of my Lady is odd;
But poetry moves her no more than a clod.

SAPPHIC.

What! no reliſh for rhyme!—Does ſhe never repeat
The ſoft little ſonnets I've laid at her feet?

JENNY.

Ah, Sir! would my Miſtreſs were once of my mind;
(For I read all the verſes of yours that I find)
But my Lady's ſo cruel ſhe thwarts my deſire,
And to hide them from me throws them into the fire.

SAPPHIC.

She's a fool—ſhe's a fool *(aſide.)*—I ſhould have a fine life;
With ſuch a proſaic dull jade of a wife.

JENNY.

But, my good Sir, I hope you will not be dejected,
I could tell you by whom all your wit is reſpected.
There's a heart upon which you have made ſuch impreſſion—
But I muſt not betray her by my indiſcretion.

SAPPHIC.

Whom d' ye mean, my good Jenny? come, tell me, my dear.

JENNY.

You would make a bad uſe of the ſecret I fear.—

Now I hope I ſhall lead the Bard into a ſcrape, (*aſide.*)
For he bites like a Gudgeon, and cannot eſcape.

SAPPHIC.

Come, ſay who's in love with me—if ſhe is fair,
I'll not leave the dear creature, I vow, to deſpair.

JENNY.

O lud! I proteſt ſhe is coming this way;
But I did not intend her regard to betray.
I muſt fly—but I beg that you'll not be too free. [*Exit.*

SAPPHIC.

Madam Felix!—I thought ſhe was partial to me.

Enter Mrs. Felix.

Mrs. FELIX.

May I enter without incommoding the Muſe?

SAPPHIC.

By a queſtion like this your own charms you abuſe.
Thoſe eyes, my dear Madam, were form'd, I profeſs,
To inſpirit a Poet, and not to depreſs;
From your preſence he ſurely muſt catch inſpiration.

Mrs. FELIX.

A very poetical fine ſalutation!
But I ſeriouſly beg, if you're buſy with rhyme,
That you will not allow me to take up your time.
As I'm not Selina, you're free from reſtriction,
And may tell me plain truths, unembelliſh'd with fiction.

SAPPHIC.

Then I ſwear, my dear Creature, I ſwear by this hand,
That I feel as I touch it my genius expand;
That your lips—O by Jove! he's a madman or booby,
Who roves to the Indies for diamond or ruby;
And each vein in my heart his ſtrange folly condemns,
Who leaves theſe more bright and more exquiſite gems.

Sweet

Sweet Fair! let me keep, while their richneſs I praiſe,
The cold damp of neglect from o'erclouding their rays.

(*While* Mr. Sapphic *kiſſes* Mrs. Felix *with great vehemence*, Jenny *enters unperceived.*)

JENNY.

O ho!—have I caught you; impertinent Poet!
This is more than I hop'd for—my Maſter ſhall know it. [*Exit.*

Mrs. FELIX.

Good God! Mr. Sapphic, what frantic illuſion
Has produc'd this ridiculous ſcene of confuſion?
All Poets are Quixotes in love, I am told;
And the truth of the adage in you I behold.
As the Knight once miſtook an old mill for a giant,
Your ſenſe as diſorder'd, your fancy as pliant,
Takes me for my Couſin—your love's ebullition
I only can pardon on this ſuppoſition.
I fain would ſuppoſe that no inſult was meant,
Nor believe you could think, what I ought to reſent.

SAPPHIC.

O! talk not of anger with lips that inſpire
The ſtrongeſt ſenſation of rapturous fire,
That with love's ſweet convulſions ſhake every nerve;
O! think not that I your reſentment deſerve;
Becauſe my warm heart, thus engroſs'd by your charms,
Is ambitious of filling theſe dear empty arms.
No, let me while baſking beneath your bright eye,
The place of a thankleſs deſerter ſupply;
And in this melting breaſt kindle ecſtacy's flame,
Which Nature deſign'd for ſo glowing a frame.

Mrs. FELIX.

Away, Sir! and ſince in your fondling inſanity
You reject the excuſe which I form'd for your vanity,

My threats muſt inform you—

SAPPHIC.

O! frown not, ſweet Creature;
Let not wrath ſpoil the charm of thy every feature.

Mrs. FELIX.

Regain you your ſenſe—from my wrath you are free,
Which ſhould not be rais'd by a being like thee;
Begone then!—my pardon in vain you'll implore,
If you dare on this ſubject to breathe a word more.

SAPPHIC.

Words, indeed, my warm fair one, by Nature's confeſſion,
For the love that I feel, are no proper expreſſion;
The ſoul's fond intent in ſoft murmurs ſhould ſwell,
And kiſſes explain what no language can tell.
Ye Gods, how luxuriant!

Mrs. FELIX.

Away! quit my arm!
Or my cries in an inſtant the houſe ſhall alarm.

SAPPHIC.

Provoking ſweet Creature! —indulge my fond paſſion;
Come, come, don't I know you're a woman of faſhion?
Your coyneſs, I've heard, you can ſometimes give over;
And I'm ſure you're too wiſe to be true to a rover.
Beſides, I have learnt, that with partial regard
You have caſt a kind eye on your ill-treated Bard.

Mrs. FELIX.

Away! thou vain coxcomb! nor, baſe as thou art,
Inſult the bright Lord of ſo loyal a heart;
Begone!—I abhor thee—my perſon releaſe!—

Sir NICHOLAS, *entering*.

Is it thus, my young Sir, you pay court to my Niece!

SAPPHIC.

SAPPHIC.

Confuſion! What devil has ſent the old Knight?

Sir NICHOLAS.

How dare you, pert ſtripling, almoſt in my ſight
To inſult a chaſte Female that's under my roof?—
But ſince of your baſeneſs you give me ſuch proof,
You ſhall feel it repaid by a proper correction.

SAPPHIC (*aſide.*)

Deuce take this perverſe and unlucky detection:
I wiſh I had wiſely, as Morley had taught me,
Renounc'd that jade Venus before he thus caught me.
What excuſe can I make him?— (*To* Sir Nicholas) My dear
worthy Sir,
Tho' I now ſeem moſt juſtly your wrath to incur,
Yet as you grow cool, your opinion will vary,
You will not reſent much an idle vagary,
A mere romping frolic—

Sir NICHOLAS.

A frolic, d'ye ſay!
Then a frolic of mine ſhall your frolic repay.
Call our Servants to puniſh this frolicſome Spark,
They ſhall drag him acroſs the new pond in the park.

SAPPHIC (*aſide.*)

'Tis what he can't mean—yet his countenance ſuch is,
I wiſh from my ſoul I was out of his clutches.—
(*To* Sir Nicholas.)
Dear Sir, I aſſure you, I'm griev'd beyond meaſure
That I thus have awaken'd your furious diſpleaſure;
When calmer—

Sir NICHOLAS.

Young Man, I am not in a fury,
A ſentence more juſt never came from a jury;

Such

Such frolics as yours have Old England diſgrac'd :
In High Life let them flouriſh as Faſhion and Taſte.
To thoſe wanton young fellows I am not ſevere,
Who attack the looſe Wife of a vain gambling Peer.
My Lady whoſe Lord waſtes at Hazard the night,
May plead to more generous pleaſures ſome right ;
I care not how each keeps their conjugal oath,
Since honour and peace muſt be ſtrangers to both.
But when a brave Soldier, pure Glory's true ſon,
Ennobled with laurels laborioufly won ;
When riſking in far diſtant climates his life,
To his Country he leaves a fair innocent Wife ;
Accurſt be the man, who, to Friendſhip unjuſt,
Fails to guard as his ſoul this moſt delicate truſt ;
Or to puniſh thoſe Fops who inſult her chaſte beauty,
And invite her to ſwerve from her honour and duty.
Of the doom that I think to ſuch Libertines due,
I will give to the world an example in you.
Our old Engliſh diſcipline, Ducking, by name,
Shall atone for your outrage, by quenching your flame.
Here ! William and John !

Mrs. FELIX.

For my ſake, I intreat
That you will not, dear Sir, this rough vengeance compleat,

Sir NICHOLAS.

By Jupiter, Couſin, to make him leſs fond,
He ſhall croak out his love to the frogs of our pond.—
Here, William ! tell Jack after Stephen to ſkip,
And tell the old Huntſman to come with his whip,
Then wait all together around the hall door.

SAPPHIC.

O mercy, dear Sir! I your mercy implore.

You

You will not deſtroy me?

Sir NICHOLAS.

No, only correct,
And teach you a brave Soldier's Wife to reſpect.

Mrs. FELIX.

Yet think, my dear Couſin, yet think, for my ſake,
What a noiſe this ridiculous matter will make.
You know that my Felix's nature is ſuch,
He don't wiſh his Wife to be talk'd of too much;
His honour and quiet let us make our care,
And bury in ſilence this fooliſh affair:
Perhaps, in my manners too eaſy and gay,
My levity led the young Poet aſtray.

Sir NICHOLAS.

No, no! my good Creature, you muſt not arraign
Your innocent ſelf in a buſineſs ſo plain:
Beſides, his offence by this plea cannot ſink,
For they are the worſt of all puppies that think
Each woman's a wanton who is not preciſe,
And that cheerfulneſs muſt be the herald of vice.

Mrs. FELIX.

Howe'er this may be—as he's now all repentance,
I earneſtly beg a repeal of your ſentence.

SAPPHIC.

Dear Ma'am I adore you for this interceſſion;
And I truſt the good Knight will forgive my tranſgreſſion.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Well, Sir, as beyond your deſert you're befriended
By that virtue which you have ſo groſsly offended,
You are free to depart; but remember, young Swain,
That you ne'er touch the Wife of a Soldier again.

SAPPHIC.

If I do, may I die by the wind of a ball!
Heaven bleſs you, good Folks, and this ſociable hall!
Since my amorous folly your friendſhip thus loſes,
My amours ſhall henceforth be confin'd to the Muſes. [*Exit.*

Mrs. FELIX.

I thank you, dear Sir, and rejoice in my heart
That in ſafety you've ſuffer'd this Youth to depart.

Sir NICHOLAS.

By Jupiter, Coz, I had cool'd your warm Poet,
Had I not been afraid all our neighbours might know it,
And make you the ſubject of ſuch converſation
As I think your nice Colonel would hear with vexation.
Then, ſince for your ſake I have let the Bard go,
Come and aid me to ſettle all matters below:
That my anxious cares in her comfort may ceaſe,
I'm reſolv'd young Deciſive ſhall marry my niece.

End of ACT II.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

Enter Mrs. Felix *and* Selina.

Mrs. Felix.

WELL, my dear, what d'ye think of our medical friend
Whom the letters of Felix ſo highly commend?
If my gratitude does not my judgment miſlead,
He's the man in the world who with you might ſucceed;
Tho' gentle, yet manly, tho' baſhful, polite,
Are you not half in love?—

Selina.

Yes, indeed, at firſt ſight!—
His ſervice to you on my heart is engrav'd,
And I love him, I own, for the life he has ſav'd.
To win me perhaps he might not find it hard,
So eſteem'd as he is by the friends I regard;
But I fancy ſuch thoughts will not enter his brain;
And for my part, inſtead of attracting a Swain,
I only ſhall think, as they heartily vex me,
Of eſcaping from thoſe who already perplex me.

Mrs. Felix.

O make yourſelf eaſy, I pray, on that head;
In the deepeſt diſgrace the poor Poet is fled,
And I truſt that the Critic will ſoon ſhare his fate.
Come with me—I've a moſt curious tale to relate.
Let us haſte—I perceive that Deciſive is near,
In whoſe preſent diſcourſe I would not interfere. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Deciſive *and* Morley.

DECISIVE.

So while in the grove I was coolly projecting
New plans for the temple the Knight is erecting,
Our Poet, addicted to amorous ſin,
Grew a little too fond of the Ladies within:
But diſcovery happen'd his paſſion to damp;
And this is the cauſe of his haſte to decamp.

MORLEY.

The old Knight, I believe, ſuch reſentment expreſs'd
As quicken'd the ſpeed of his fugitive gueſt;
On Terror's ſwift wing he is certainly flown,
And as he has retreated, the field is your own.

DECISIVE.

As a rival I had not much fear of poor Sapphic;
Bad rhyme's current coin in moſt amorous traffic,
But would not paſs here.

MORLEY.

I think not in your view,
As it finds ſuch a critical touchſtone in you.
The Poet's diſmiſſion your triumph enſures,
And the prize, my good friend, is now certainly yours;
A prize, that we juſtly may call very great,
A lovely ſweet Girl with a noble eſtate.

DECISIVE.

The Girl's very well, but knows nothing of life;
It will coſt me ſome pains to new model my Wife;
But I think ſhe will gladly receive my correction,
And my wealthy old Kinſman approve the connection.

(*Coughs.*)

MORLEY.

You've a cough, my good Friend,

DECISIVE.

DECISIVE.

Yes, a trifling one: *Hem!*
Have you got any Indian preſcription for phlegm?

MORLEY.

Believe me, that cough is no trifling affair;
It calls, I aſſure you, for caution and care.
With regret I point out ſo unpleaſant a truth,
But your conſtitution I've known from your youth;
Your hectic appearance I ſee with concern,
As I know, with your frame if health takes ſuch a turn,
The leaſt indiſcretion your life may deſtroy.
The ſlighteſt exceſs in diverſion, and joy;
Even thoſe tender cares, which on life's pureſt plan
Muſt belong to the ſtate of a Family Man,
May lead to diſeaſe from which art cannot ſave,
And rapidly hurry you into the grave.
'Twere better this courtſhip of yours ſhould miſcarry,
For you'll certainly die in ſix months if you marry.

DECISIVE.

Are you ſerious, dear Doctor?

MORLEY.

By ſuch a ſad end
I lately have loſt a poor good-humour'd friend.
You remember Jack Dangle at College, no doubt;
He was juſt of your age, and a little more ſtout;
He, with other young ſages, left Weſtminſter Hall
To teach Engliſh law to the ſlaves of Bengal.
But Jack, in his new chamber-practice at leaſt,
Too eagerly follow'd the rules of the Eaſt.
A bad cough enſu'd, much like yours in its ſound—

(Deciſive *coughs.*)

Good God! I could ſwear 'twas poor Jack under ground,

'Tis his tone ſo exactly, ſepulchral and hollow!
The ſyſtem he ſlighted I hope you will follow.
With pains in his breaſt he was ſharply tormented;
But as he at firſt to my guidance conſented,
Some time my ſtrict regimen kept him alive,
Poor Dangle once more was beginning to thrive;
And had he ſome months in my plan perſever'd,
On the earth at this moment he might have appear'd;
But chance threw a pretty white girl in his way,
And eager for marriage, fond Jack would not ſtay:
In vain I conjur'd him to wait half a year,
And ſhew'd him the danger he ran very clear.
He thought the remains of his cough but a trifle,
And being unable his paſſion to ſtifle,
He took his fair wife;—but, alas! the vile cough
Encreas'd every day till it carried him off!

DECISIVE.

I don't recollect any pain in my breaſt,
But I feel a ſtrange tightneſs juſt now in my cheſt.

MORLEY.

How's your ſtomach?

DECISIVE.

I've nothing to fear on that ſcore.

MORLEY.

Do you eat as you did?

DECISIVE.

Yes, I think rather more.

MORLEY.

That ravenous hunger's the thing that I dread.
How d'ye ſleep?

DECISIVE.

All the time that I paſs in my bed.

MORLEY.

MORLEY.

Indeed!—I don't like ſo lethargic a ſlumber.

DECISIVE.

Why! my Friend! of good ſymptoms theſe rank in the number.

MORLEY.

Alas! you may call them all good if you pleaſe,
By that title you only confirm your diſeaſe,
In which, tho' the patient declines very faſt,
He for ever will flatter himſelf to the laſt.
Believe me, your ſymptoms are rather alarming,
Yet your preſent diſorder there is not much harm in.
If you can but abſtain, with a ſpirit reſign'd,
From all that may harraſs your body or mind,
To a different climate I wiſh you'd repair,
And for one Winter breathe a leſs changeable air.
Spend a Chriſtmas at Naples, and when you return
You may marry without any anxious concern.
But you're now at that critical period of life
When, in ſuch frames as yours, nature feels an odd ſtrife,
And, if quiet does not all her functions befriend,
The ſhort earthly ſcene on a ſudden will end.
On a point ſo important you'll pardon my freedom.

DECISIVE.

Your cautions oblige me, I feel that I need 'em,
For in truth I am growing as thin as a rabbit,
And there's ſomething conſumptive I know in my habit.
My father died ſoon after taking a Wife,
And cough'd out his ſoul when I jump'd into life:
I ſuppoſe I am going.

MORLEY.

Take courage, my Friend;
On your own prudent conduct your life will depend.

If

If you take but due care for two years, I'll engage
You will ſtand a fair chance for a healthy old age.
Nor would I adviſe you this Girl to refuſe,
A diſtant attachment your mind will amuſe;
And, no doubt, for a man of your fortune and figure
She will wait till your health has recover'd its vigour.

DECISIVE.

I can part with the Girl without feeling a chaſm
In my heart; that will ſhake with no amorous ſpaſm;
For, to tell you the truth, my old rich Uncle Cob
Is more eager than I for this marrying job.
By this ſcheme the old Blade is ſupremely delighted,
Becauſe two large manors may thus be united:
But when of his park I've extended the bound,
It will do me ſmall good if I ſink under ground;
And I'm not ſuch a fool in theſe projects of pelf,
To humour my friends and endanger myſelf.

MORLEY.

Indeed I'd not wed for an old Uncle's whim;
But here comes our Knight, I ſhall leave you with him,
As I think you've ſome delicate points to adjuſt. [*Exit.*

DECISIVE, *alone.*

I'm in no haſte to ſleep with my Anceſtor's duſt.
'Tis wiſer my weak conſtitution to ſave,
Than to marry, and ſo travel poſt to the grave.

Enter Sir Nicholas.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Come, give me your hand, and rejoice, my young Neighbour,
You're the man that's to order the pipe and the tabor;
And by Jove we'll all dance on ſo joyous a day;
Your wedding, dear Dick, ſhall be ſpeedy and gay;

For

For your Rival is gone with our ſerious diſpleaſure,
And I give to your wiſhes my young lovely Treaſure.—
A treaſure ſhe is, tho' the Girl is my Niece;
Heaven grant ye long years of affection and peace!
And a fine chopping Boy ere the end of the firſt—
Remember that I am to ſee the rogue nurs'd.
Go, you happy young dog, go and ſeal with a kiſs,
And teach the old hall to re-echo your bliſs.
As I know on this match what Sir Jacob intends,
And we can ſo well truſt each other as friends,
Short contracts will anſwer as well as the beſt,
Our lawyers at leiſure may finiſh the reſt,
I know all ſuſpence in ſuch caſes is hard,
And you ſhall not, I ſwear, from your bliſs be debar'd,
While o'er acres of parchment they're crawling like ſnails,

DECISIVE.

Dear Sir, upon weighing in Reaſon's juſt ſcales
Your very great favours and my weak pretenſion,
I find I'm unworthy of ſuch condeſcenſion,
And muſt, with regret, the high honour reſign,
Which I once vainly thought might with juſtice be mine,

Sir NICHOLAS.

Hey-day! what does all this formality mean?
Why Dick! has the Devil poſſeſs'd you with ſpleen?
Or has Love made your mind thus with diffidence ſore?
Falſe modeſty ne'er was your foible before.
You think you're unworthy!—the thought is ſo new,
That I hardly can tell what to ſay or to do.
If you love the good Girl full as much as you ſaid,
I think you have very juſt claims to her bed;
But if your mind's chang'd, and you feel your love lighter,
'Tis better to ſay ſo, than marry and ſlight her:

And if this be the caſe, Sir, you have your releaſe;
For although I am eager to marry my Niece,
Tho' I'm partial to you, yet I beg you to note,
That I don't want to cram her down any man's thtoat.

DECISIVE.

I'm truly convinc'd of the Lady's perfection,
And 'twould pleaſe me, dear Sir, to preſerve the connection,
Tho' now, by particular reaſons, am led
To reviſit the Continent once ere I wed,
In the time of my abſence I can't be exact;
But in what form you pleaſe I will freely contract,
In the courſe of two years to receive as my Wife—

Sir NICHOLAS.

Do you mean to inſult me, you Puppy? Od's-life!
Ere I'd tie my dear Girl to ſo ſilly a Fop
For life, I'd condemn her to trundle a mop.
And let me adviſe you, young man, for the future,
To know your own mind ere you go as a ſuitor.

DECISIVE.

I perceive, Sir, my preſence grows irkſome to you,
And you'll therefore allow me to bid you adieu.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Your departure, indeed, I don't wiſh to reſtrain,
And have little concern when I ſee you again.

(*Exit* Deciſive.

Sir NICHOLAS *alone.*

What can make this pert Puppy recede from his ſuit?
My fair Couſin and he have ſcarce had a diſpute;
She would hardly affront him on purpoſe to vex me!—
Here ſhe comes to explain all the points that perplex me.

Enter

Enter Mrs. Felix.

Well, Couſin, my ſcheme for a wedding's ſuſpended,
The Beaux are both gone, and their courtſhip is ended;
With an air ſo myſterious Deciſive withdraws,
I a little ſuſpect you're concern'd as the cauſe:
Confeſs, have you had any words with this Youth?

Mrs. Felix.

Not I, my dear Sir, on my honour and truth.
But I'm ready to own that the news you impart,
With ſurprize and with pleaſure enlivens my heart.
I think your ſweet Niece has a lucky eſcape:
I would almoſt as ſoon ſee her marry an ape
As her union with one of theſe Coxcombs behold;
The Bard is too warm, and the Critic too cold.

Sir Nicholas.

I find that they are not ſuch Lads as I thought 'em;
The World all the worſt of its faſhions has taught 'em;
And the World is indeed at a very fine paſs,
When ſuch Puppies inſult ſo attractive a Laſs.
Young Fellows of fortune now think it hard duty
To pay a chaſte homage to Virtue and Beauty.
But I'll leave theſe pert Fops to their own vile caprice,
And ſoon find a much fitter match for my Niece.
Other orders of men for a huſband I'll ſearch,
And I think I can ſettle my Girl in the Church.

Mrs. Felix.

Lord, Couſin! I thought you deteſted the Cloth!

Sir Nicholas.

Our Rector I own often kindles my wrath;
But all Parſons are not like my neighbour, old Squabble,
Who has learnt from his geeſe both to hiſs and to gobble,

We have in our neighbourhood three young Divines,
And each, I believe, to Selina inclines.
Our Biſhop's ſmart Nephew deſerves a ſweet Wench,
He himſelf in due time may be rais'd to the Bench;
With him I ſhould like very well to unite her:
And if he hereafter ſhould riſe to the Mitre,
Then perhaps we together might bring to perfection
A much-wanted plan for the Church's correction.

Mrs. FELIX.

A very fine ſcheme which you'll manage, no doubt!

Sir NICHOLAS.

More wonderful things I have known brought about;
And tho' my firſt plan, as you ſee, has miſcarried,
I'm reſolv'd that my Niece ſhall be ſpeedily married.
I'll unite the good Girl to a Prieſt, if I'm able;
For the young Olive Branch never fails at his table.
There is one I prefer—but to leave the Girl free,
I allow her to make a fair choice of the Three:
I ſhall therefore invite the whole groupe to the hall,
And I'll now go and make her write cards to them all. [*Exit.*

Mrs. FELIX *alone.*

What a wonderful creature is this worthy Knight!
To make others happy is all his delight!
Yet, miſled by ſome wild philanthropic illuſion,
He's for ever involv'd in odd ſcenes of confuſion.
'Tis well that our Critic has made his laſt bow,
I rejoice he's remov'd, and I long to know how.

Enter Morley.

MORLEY.

Thank my ſtars, my dear Ma'am, I've diſpatch'd your commiſſion;
Your ſweet Friend is, I hope, in a tranquil condition:

From

From her two irkſome Lovers ſhe now is reliev'd.

Mrs. FELIX.

And I'm dying to know how all this was atchiev'd.
Come tell me, good Creature, how could you effect it?

MORLEY.

By a project ſo ſimple you'd never ſuſpect it:
I have baniſh'd both Swains, by declaring a Wife
Would rob one of glory, and t'other of life,
I perſuaded the Bard his poetical fame
Could never exiſt with a conjugal flame:
Hence he grew with your charms ſo licentiouſly free,
But forgive me this ill which I could not foreſee,
Deciſive, more wiſely, abandons the Fair
To make his own lungs his particular care.

Mrs. FELIX.

What! on ſuch points as theſe have they taken your word?

MORLEY.

Dear Madam! mankind credit things moſt abſurd,
When they come from the mouth of a medical man;
Hence Mountebanks never want ſkill to trepan.
The extent of our empire indeed there's no ſeeing,
When we act on the fears of a true ſelfiſh being.

Mrs. FELIX.

How ſimple ſoever the means you've employ'd,
You have remedy'd ills by which we were annoy'd.
Having thus clear'd the ſcene from each troubleſome Lover,
Can you not for the Nymph a fit Huſband diſcover?
You ſee how ſhe's preſt by her Uncle to wed,
Who ne'er quits a ſcheme he once takes in his head.—
Suppoſe her kind fancy ſhould lean towards you,
Is your heart quite as free as I'm ſure 'twould be true?
Is it not pr e-engag'd?

MORLEY.

As in mirth's ſportive ſally
It pleaſes you thus a poor pilgrim to rally,
Your good nature I know will forgive me if I
To your pleaſantry make a too ſerious reply.
'Tis my maxim to ſpeak, whatſoe'er be the theme,
With a heart undiſguis'd to the friends I eſteem:
Had I all India's wealth, 'twould be my inclination
To offer it all to your lovely Relation,
But ſuppoſing it poſſible you could be willing
To unite her with one who is ſcarce worth a ſhilling;
Believe me, dear Madam, my pride is too great
To wiſh her to ſtoop to my humble eſtate.

MRS. FELIX.

Such pride, tho' it reſts upon no ſtrong foundation,
Is noble, I own, and deſerves admiration.
I call it ill-founded, becauſe, in my mind,
If there's fortune enough for a couple when join'd,
If talents and worth are by each duly ſhar'd,
If in all other points they are equally pair'd,
And mutual regard mutual merit enhances,
It ſignifies not which ſupply'd their finances.

MORLEY.

Your pardon—how often when fortune's unequal,
Gay weddings produce a moſt turbulent ſequel?
But could I once hope your ſweet Couſin to gain,
How many things are there ſuch hopes to reſtrain?
Suppoſe your dear Colonel, my moſt noble Friend,
Whom ſucceſs to your arms may more ſpeedily ſend!
Suppoſe, having clos'd the bright work he has plann'd,
His return from the Eaſt he ſhould haſten by land;

Suppoſe

Suppoſe him arriv'd, with what face could I meet
The man whom my heart ſhould exultingly greet,
If he found me attempting, in ſpite of my ſtation,
To wed, tho' a beggar, your wealthy Relation?

Mrs. FELIX.

From theſe words my dear Friend, which I almoſt adore,
And a few ſlighter hints that eſcap'd you before,
I have caught a quick hope, which is fraught with delight,
That I ſoon ſhall be bleſt with my Felix's ſight:
I begin to ſuſpect he's in England already;
I perceive that you can't keep your countenance ſteady.
With his uſual attention his love has reflected
How my poor fooliſh nerves by ſurpriſe are affected;
And leſt they ſhould fail me beyond all revival,
Has ſent you to prepare for his wiſh'd-for arrival.
Am I right in my gueſs? Is he not very near?
Could I truſt my own heart, I ſhould think Felix here.

COLONEL FELIX, *entering.*

Sweet Foreboder, behold him reſtor'd to your arms.

Mrs. FELIX.

O my Felix! this tranſport o'erpays all alarms,
Thus to ſee thee reſtor'd, and ennobled with fame!
In what words ſhall affection thy welcome proclaim?

COLONEL.

My love! my bleſt Treaſure! than glory more dear!
The bliſs of this meeting, which ſhines in thy tear,
That we owe to this Friend let us never forget.

MORLEY.

My ſhare in your tranſport o'erpays all the debt.—
But, Colonel, your fondneſs has travell'd full ſpeed,
And has not allow'd me the time you agreed.

COLONEL.

COLONEL.

I meant not, indeed, to have join'd you to-day,
But I found Love forbade my intended delay.

MORLEY.

Well, my duty is done, now you happily meet;
Heaven bleſs you together!—

Mrs. FELIX.

Stay, ſtay, I entreat;
You muſt not go yet; and before you depart,
I will open to Felix the ſcheme of my heart.

SELINA (*behind the ſcene.*)

Indeed, Sir, I never can write ſuch a card.

Sir NICHOLAS (*behind the ſcene.*)

Then you'll forfeit at once my paternal regard!

COLONEL.

Hey-day! in the houſe I much fear ſomething's wrong,
As Sir Nicholas talks in a language ſo ſtrong.

Mrs. FELIX.

Does he know you are here?

COLONEL.

No, my Dear, I think not,
Unleſs he the tidings from Jenny has got;
She alone ſaw me come, and without much ado
Moſt kindly directed me where to find you.

Mrs. FELIX.

They are coming this way—let's withdraw all together,
And contrive how to turn this loud ſtorm to fair weather.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter

Enter Sir Nicholas *and* Selina.

Sir Nicholas.

I inſiſt on your writing ſuch cards to 'em all!

Selina.

Dear Uncle, I beg you'll this order recall.
You know your commands I much wiſh to obey;
But reflect on this matter what people will ſay:
You're ſo eager to marry your Niece, they will ſwear,
That you hawk her about juſt like goods at a fair.

Sir Nicholas.

Well, my Dear, let 'em ſay ſo, and I'll ſay ſo too;
For your ſimile proves what a Guardian ſhould do.
He who wants to diſpoſe of a tender young maid,
May take a good hint from the gingerbread trade:
If he has any ſenſe, 'twill be ever his plan
To part with ſoft paſtry as ſoon as he can;
For, egad, an old maid is like old harden'd paſte,
You may cry it about, but nobody will taſte.
Come, do as I bid you, and take up your pen.

Selina.

Lord, Sir! it will ſeem very odd to theſe men;
You will make me appear in a horrible light;
I vow my hand ſhakes ſo, I never can write.
Excuſe me, dear Sir, from this buſineſs, pray do,
And let me live ſingle for ever with you.

Sir Nicholas.

All buſineſs where woman's concern'd, I believe,
Muſt partake of the curſe from our Grandmother Eve.
All her Daughters the ſteps of their Parent have follow'd,
Contradiction, the core of the apple ſhe ſwallow'd,
In their veins ſtill fermenting new ills can produce,
And all their blood ſeems Coloquintida juice.—

You

You froward croſs Baggage! your word ſhould I take,
And bid you live ſingle five years for my ſake,
Of the barbarous Uncle you'd quickly complain,
Who from Nature's juſt right a young Girl wou'd reſtrain!

SELINA.

Indeed, Sir, I ſhould not.

Sir NICHOLAS.

I tell you you wou'd.
From perverſeneſs alone you oppoſe your own good.
'Tis only to thwart me, becauſe I deſire
To ſee you well ſettled before I expire,
That you now with your ſoft hypocritical carriage,
Affect to have no inclination to marriage.
But you'll never contrive, tho' your tongue may be nimble,
To convince me your heart is as cold as your thimble.
I know of what ſtuff froward damſels are made,
The Guardian muſt force you who cannot perſuade.
That you'll like a good huſband, I never can doubt;
And married you ſhall be before the month's out,
Or at leaſt your kind Uncle no more you ſhall teaze,
But may e'en go to Rome and turn Nun if you pleaſe.

SELINA (*aſide.*)

I have loſt all the love he has ſhewn me for years;
If I ſtrive to reply I ſhall burſt into tears.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Come, anſwer me, Miſs! will you ſcribble or not?

Enter the Colonel, Mrs. Felix *and* Morley.

COLONEL.

My worthy old Friend, what can make you ſo hot?

Sir NICHOLAS.

Ha, Colonel!—you find me a little concern'd—
But I'm heartily glad you are ſafely return'd.

Your

Your arrival indeed is a welcome ſurprize,
Tho' before you your fame a bright harbinger flies;
We have heard your ſucceſs, and we all triumph in it.

COLONEL.

I truſt I am come in a fortunate minute
To make all your preſent embarraſſment ceaſe,
For I bring a young Huſband, my Friend, for your Niece.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Egad that's well ſaid; and I'm ſure it's well meant;
And if he's like you he ſhall have my conſent.

COLONEL.

He has many more virtues, and juſt as much wealth,
And from India brings home both his morals and health;
Here, my Friend, is the Man.—As I owe him my life,
I wiſh to preſent him ſo lovely a Wife;
Half my fortune is his—here I freely declare it,
And have only to hope that Selina may ſhare it.
I've regarded her long as a child of my own;
Nor can my affection more truly be ſhown,
Than by wiſhing to place the dear Girl in the arms
Of the friend whoſe rare virtues are worthy her charms.

MORLEY.

Dear generous Felix, I'm quite overcome,
Thy Bounty is ſuch, it ſtrikes Gratitude dumb!

COLONEL.

This was ever, my Friend, my moſt ſettled intention,
Though my very juſt purpoſe I choſe not to mention,
From the hope I ſhould find, what I gladly embrace,
A moment from which it may borrow ſome grace,
When my gift its plain value may riſe far above,
By the aid it affords to the wiſhes of Love;

And I own, as a prophet, I'm proud of my art,
Now I see the effects of her charms on your heart.

MORLEY.

O Felix! can I thus deprive thy free spirit
Of wealth, the reward of heroical merit?
Can I the victorious Commander despoil
Of what he has purchas'd with danger and toil?
Should love and delight on thy present attend,
I could never be happy in robbing a Friend.
No, I still must decline—

Sir NICHOLAS.

My dear Boy, say no more;
You're the match that I never could meet with before,
I have long sought in vain for an heir to my mind,
But all my soul wish'd, in your spirit I find.
You shall *not* rob your Friend of a single † Gold Mohr,
He can raise heirs enough to inherit his store:
To such men as himself let him haste to give birth,
And with twenty young Felixs garnish the earth.
How trifling soever your fortune may be,
From the Colonel's esteem, and the virtues I see,
I think you as noble a match for my Niece,
As I could, had you brought home a new golden fleece:
I have money enough, if you're rich in affection.—
As I always have talk'd of an equal connection,
My neighbours, perhaps, may suppose my sight dim,
Or mock my wise choice as a generous whim:
Let them study with zeal, which I hope may succeed,
Of their horses and dogs to improve the best breed;
A study more noble engrosses my mind,
To preserve the first points in the breed of mankind.

† An Indian Coin.

On the heart and the ſoul, as the firſt points, I dwell;
In theſe, my dear Children, you match mighty well;
And I think human nature in debt to my care,
For uniting two mortals who happily pair.

COLONEL.

Your hand, my dear Knight, it is glorioufly ſaid!

Sir NICHOLAS.

By Juno we'll put the young couple to bed!
We'll have no dull delays.—

Mrs. FELIX.

Now what ſay you, my Dear,
Are theſe orders for marriage too quick and ſevere?

MORLEY.

My amazement and gratitude both are extreme,
But my voice ſeems oppreſt in a heavenly dream:
Though your kindneſs is greater than language can paint,
I beg this fair hand may be free from conſtraint.

Sir NICHOLAS.

From conſtraint!—Gad, if now ſhe affects to demur,
I can tell her, my wrath ſhe ſhall ſo far incur,
She ſhall go to a convent for life, or at leaſt
Be ſent as a venture herſelf to the Eaſt.

SELINA.

My Uncle I long have obey'd, and at preſent
I cannot complain his commands are unpleaſant;
Nay more; could he place all mankind in my view,
And bid me chuſe from them, my choice would be you.

MORLEY.

To this dear declaration my life muſt reply,
All words are too weak—

Sir NICHOLAS.

The whole earth I defy.

To ſhew me a ſcene more delightful than this;
Dear honeſt frank Girl, come and give me a kiſs;
Thou'rt the creature of Nature much more than of Art,
And I own thee again as the child of my heart.

JONATHAN, *entering and ſpeaking to the* Colonel.

There are two cheſts for you, Sir, juſt come to the hall,

COLONEL.

A few Indian things for the Ladies—that's all.
Pray, Jonathan, pay thoſe who brought them with this.

[*Giving money.*

MORLEY.

My brave lad muſt ſhare in our general bliſs.
Here, Jonathan, if you're to marriage inclin'd,
And can luckily meet with a girl to your mind,
You may marry and ſettle as ſoon as you pleaſe;
The Colonel has taken good care of your eaſe.

JONATHAN.

God bleſs him, whate'er he is pleas'd to beſtow!
I think I have found a kind ſweetheart below.

Mrs. FELIX.

He has made choice of Jenny;—and I will provide
A fortune, my Friend, for your good-humour'd Bride.

Sir NICHOLAS.

Egad, they ſhall have my new farm on the hill,
And raiſe young recruits there as faſt as they will.

JONATHAN.

Heaven proſper you all! I will pray for you ever,
And to ſerve my King ſtill, as I can, I'll endeavour. [*Exit.*

Sir NICHOLAS.

Well ſaid, honeſt Soldier; we'll have no delay,
Go and tell the old Parſon to keep in the way.

COLONEL.

Come with me, fair Couſin, examine my cheſts;
I long to preſent you a few bridal veſts.

Mrs. FELIX, *to* Morley.

As we view with delight the events of to-day,
A fair leſſon, my Friend, in your fate we ſurvey;
While, from love to an aged fond parent, with ſpeed,
From wealth's open road you moſt kindly recede,
Heaven ſends you that fortune you nobly have ſlighted,
And your warm filial piety here is requited;
This bright moral truth by your lot is expreſt,
"They who ſeek others' bliſs are by Providence bleſt."

Sir NICHOLAS, *to* Morley.

Here, my worthy young Friend, take and cheriſh this Fair,
And, truſt me, you'll find her deſerving your care;
For although of her ſex ſhe may have a ſmall ſpice,
She'll pleaſe you ten times where ſhe vexes you twice;
And happy the man, in this ſkirmiſhing life,
Who is able to ſay half as much of his Wife.

4 AP 54